

P-20 RESEARCH AND POLICY QUESTIONS

ESHB 2261 directs the Education Research and Data Center (ERDC) to identify the critical research and policy questions that ERDC intends to address. The list that follows is a collection of questions that will be used to steer data governance conversations and to inform the design of the Evergreen State P-20 longitudinal data system (ESP-20).

The questions have been compiled from a variety of sources and span the education sectors ranging from early learning, through K-12, post-secondary and into the workforce. The K-12 data governance committee, also established in ESHB 2261, was tasked with identifying critical research and policy questions but more specifically those that need to be addressed by the K-12 education data improvement system. A consulting group performed this work by reviewing national literature on longitudinal data systems and by interviewing and surveying representatives of stakeholder groups. Many of those questions identified as high priority for the K-12 system have been included in this ERDC collection of research and policy questions. Additional questions have been incorporated to cover the P-20 spectrum.

Themes of some questions appear across all education sectors: How does student achievement vary by characteristic, such as race/ethnicity, gender, income or financial aid status, participation in a particular program, or school attended. What factors are associated with differences in educational outcomes? Outcomes or student achievement may be measured by tracking whether a student progresses to the next education level, assessment scores, course completion, or employment.

Members of ERDC staff have considered numerous criteria in developing and prioritizing this list:

- *Expressed interest.* Have members of the legislature, policy-makers, program staff, or the public expressed interest in this issue? Has the topic come up in policy or evaluation discussions?
- *ERDC suitability.* Can ERDC add value by contributing information or analyses in this area? Does the question span educational sectors or does it involve longitudinal analyses? Agencies are generally the best source for sector-specific questions, although ERDC staff may contribute analytical resources to certain data topics.
- *Size of student population being studied.*
- *Overall system cost of the program or the students being studied.*
- *Cost per student.*
- *Data availability.*
- *Ease of analysis.*

In general, ERDC will avoid narrow or local topics, but will address questions on a statewide level or will compare districts or geographies across the state. The list of possible questions is not intended to be exhaustive nor is it final. ERDC staff expect that the questions will evolve and priorities will change as issues arise and more data become available for analysis.

QUESTION CATEGORIES:

- **Bold: an ERDC priority.**
- Question ERDC intends to address, but lower priority.
- Data are not yet available. (**Bold** indicates will be a priority when data become available)
- *Italics: Question that is more appropriately answered "within sector," though ERDC could conduct analyses or contribute.*

→ **STUDENT PROFILE: WHO ARE THE STUDENTS? WHAT ARE THEIR CHARACTERISTICS?**

- **What are the demographic, mobility, program, class, grade and course-taking profiles of students who do and do not achieve and what are their outcomes?**
- **Are students working while in school? What are the characteristics of working students?**
- **How many students receive financial aid and what are their characteristics?**
- What are the characteristics and academic profile of students who are new to the state and to specific districts?
- To what extent are Washington bachelor's degree holders going on to graduate/professional school?
- What are the characteristics of graduate or professional school students? (baccalaureate majors, race/ethnicity, gender, occupation, etc)
- What are the characteristics of students in a school who have been involved in discipline incidents, suspended, expelled, or dropped out of school?
- What percent of children entering kindergarten are kindergarten-ready? How does kindergarten readiness relate to a child's performance in subsequent grades?
- *Compared to state trends, what are the variations in district/school enrollment trends at different grade levels by gender, ethnicity, eligibility for free/reduced lunch, students in special education, students in ELL programs and combinations?*
- *How have district/school subgroup attendance patterns changed at different grade levels?*
- *What are the characteristics of high attendance and low attendance students by school, grade level and subgroup?*
- *What is the previous academic and attendance record of students who are new to the district, by school?*
- *What percentage of students transfer in or out at specific times of the school year by subgroup and where do they go?*

→ **QUALITY/ACHIEVEMENT: WHAT ARE STUDENTS DOING? HOW WELL? COURSE-TAKING, ASSESSMENTS, TESTS, ETC.**

- **How do the performance profiles of high mobility students compare to those of other students, e.g., attendance, proficiency, graduation, post-secondary enrollment?**

- **Is there a relation between college major and time-to-degree?**
- **How do need-based aid recipients compare to non need-based aid recipients with respect to academic preparation in high school, remedial needs at postsecondary institutions, degree completion, time to degree, etc.**
- What are the early indicators of success or failure for students in an elementary school, i.e., what is the K–3 profile of students who either succeeded or failed?
- **What are the attendance patterns and proficiency levels of students who drop out by subgroup?**
- How have individual district/school subgroup participation rates in AP, IB, SAT, and ACT exams changed and how do they compare to similar districts/schools?
- What is the relation between absence and performance on state assessments for different subgroups?
- How have individual district/school subgroup participation rates in advanced middle school courses changed and how do they compare to similar districts/schools?
- *How do district/school changes in the percent of students who pass AP courses and ACT, SAT, and IB exams compare to state trends?*
- *What is the grade-to-grade progress of student subgroups on the state assessments in reading and mathematics, i.e., what percent of students initially below proficient reach proficiency and what percent either maintain or lose proficiency over time?*
- *Are English Language Learners making progress to attain English proficiency, by school and district?*
- *What is the relation between grades and performance on state assessments?*

→ **TRANSITION / ADVANCEMENT: OUTCOMES – DO STUDENTS CONTINUE ON EDUCATION PATH? GRADUATION RATES, DROPOUTS, RETENTION, EMPLOYMENT**

- **How are students from specific high schools performing at the post secondary level, and what are the strongest predictors of post secondary success, i.e., what are the high school profiles of students who succeed at the post secondary level?**
- **What are the education and workforce outcomes of low-income students (Free or Reduced Price Lunch-eligible students)? What are their postsecondary financial aid profiles?**
- **What are the outcomes and characteristics for those who drop out of high school before earning a diploma? How many re-enter? Get a GED? Enroll in the community and technical college system? Enter the workforce?**
- **What are retention rates of baccalaureate students, by institution and student characteristics?**
- **To what extent does swirling (transfer between institutions) occur among Washington baccalaureate and community and technical colleges?**

- **Where are baccalaureate graduates after graduation? What are their employment characteristics? Are they enrolled in graduate/professional school?**
- What are the differences in time-to-degree for transfer students compared to students entering from high school?
- Do students in dual credit programs (Running Start, College in the High School, AP, IB) complete their baccalaureate degrees faster than students who don't enroll in these acceleration programs?
- On average, how much longer do part-time college students take to complete their degree than full-time students?
- Compared to full-time college students, how many more part-time college students drop out before graduation?
- What factors or characteristics are associated with reverse transfer college students (4-year to 2-year)? With horizontal transfer college students (2-year to 2-year; 4-year to 4-year)?
- What are the education and workforce outcomes of foster youth?
- **What are the K-12 outcomes for ECEAP and Head Start participants? To what extent are they different?**
- **Do the effects of early childhood interventions "fade out" later?**
- *What are the strongest elementary school indicators of success or failure in the transition from elementary school to middle school, i.e., what are the elementary school profiles of students who succeed or fail in middle school?*
- *What are the strongest middle school indicators of success or failure in the transition from middle school to high school, i.e., what are the middle school profiles of students who either succeeded or failed?*
- *What are characteristics and outcomes of transfer students (and reverse transfer students)?*
- *What is the distribution of dropouts over the school year by subgroup and which groups have the highest dropout rates?*
- *How do increases or decreases in district/school dropout rates by subgroup compare to state dropout rates and dropout rates in similar districts/schools?*
- *How do district/school NCLB graduation rates for subgroups compare to state graduation rates and graduation rates in similar districts/schools?*

→ **PROGRAM EFFECTIVENESS AND COSTS: EVALUATION AND COMPARISONS OF PROGRAMS, SCHOOLS, DISTRICTS**

- **What are the characteristics of districts/schools that meet or do not meet accountability requirements, i.e., funding, programs and course offerings, average class size, staff allocations and teacher qualifications?**
- What are the characteristics of districts/schools that show the greatest success in helping low achieving students reach proficiency?

- What is the cost effectiveness of specific district/school programs, i.e., what are the per-pupil costs (personnel and program material costs) of programs that have improved the performance of specific subgroups?
- At the aggregate level, what are the expenditures (personnel and non-personnel) for the major expense categories defined by the district, i.e., regular education, special education, vocational education, administration, transportation, maintenance, etc.?
- What are characteristics of schools with high achievement and low achievement gaps for students?
- Which colleges do the best job in helping diverse subgroups attain a degree?
- What are the returns to education by level, degree program, curricular structure?
- **What programs, services, and instructional models have shown the most success in improving the performance of students in special education and ELL programs in similar districts/schools?**
- What reading and mathematics programs/interventions have shown the most success in increasing student proficiency at the elementary, middle and high school levels in similar districts/schools?
- What dropout prevention programs have shown the most success in decreasing dropout rates in similar districts/schools?
- *What are the characteristics of districts/schools that show the greatest success in improving the performance of students in special education and ELL programs?*
- *What is the instructional cost breakout by federal, state and local revenues at the district, school, program and classroom levels?*

→ **TEACHERS: SUPPLY, DISTRIBUTION, RETENTION, TRAINING**

- **What are the most common characteristics of the teacher workforce in schools that show the greatest success with students?**
- **What are the common characteristics of teachers who leave the teaching workforce? What are their subsequent employment characteristics?**
- **What are the differences in qualifications and experience of teachers across classrooms, i.e., is the quality of the teachers equitable across classrooms and different achievement levels?**
- **What are the characteristics of teachers who show the greatest success and least success in improving student achievement and outcomes?**
- **What are the characteristics of elementary classrooms (e.g., class size, student demographics, paraprofessional support) that show the greatest success in improving student proficiency?**
- **What were the pre-service programs of teachers who have high student success rates over time?**
- *Are National Board Certified Teachers more effective in improving student achievement in challenging schools than non-National Board Certified Teachers?*